

Language in Communion: A Faith-Based Introductory English Course

A faith-based language group and instructed class offered by Barriers To Bridges - Jerome Kiley

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity ... that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross. (Eph 2:14-16)

Overview:

Although the language barrier often creates segregation for immigrants in society - even in family and church - it is actually an opportunity for forming and growing communion. Typical ESL courses, however, operate from the perspective of an assimilation-segregation dichotomy: in the learning of English, the first language is repressed, and the student is led to assimilate to the culture and language. These courses have great difficulty accounting for and valuing cultural differences, and are not designed well for human integration in community or, in the Christian context, communion. Because of this, typical ESL courses are focused on the classroom, and do not teach participants well to be language learners, to be people who can learn English from a variety of sources in culture during times of immersion, where the majority of their lives are lived and where the vast majority of learning opportunities reside.

Language in Communion is a language ministry that interleaves the learning of language with the dynamic of Christian discipleship, love of neighbor, and the forming of communion. Recognizing that language lives within relationships, it's centered on the integration of cultures and languages, and forming people who learn and share language in relationship. Though mostly in a classroom or meeting setting, it focuses on real-life experiences; relevant themes; giving language as well as receiving; and the support of community. All together, it facilitates fast, efficient, and enjoyable language learning, and brings people together. It gives a faith-based foundation for the journey of language learning, and the ability to turn language barriers into bridges.

Goals for Participants:

1. Become inspired language learners and sharers
2. Learn basic English, share Spanish
3. Grow English support network
4. Experience communion in Christ in the context of language
5. Be a part of bridging English-speaking and Spanish-speaking communities